

# LANDOWNER-LESSEE/SPORTSMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

## **Minutes of Regular Meeting**

**Saturday, January 12, 2013**

**Arizona Game and Fish Department - Phoenix**

### **Committee Members Present**

Kurt Davis, Arizona Game and Fish Commission  
Stephen Williams, Arizona State Land Department  
Joe King, Livestock Grower  
David Hoyle, Sportsmen Group  
Darcy Ely, Livestock Grower  
Steve Carmickle, Sportsmen Group  
June Shoemaker, Bureau of Land Management  
Mark McEntarffer, Tonto National Forest  
Larry Audsley, Sportsmen Group

### **Committee Members Absent**

James O'Haco, Livestock Grower  
Sanford Cohen, OHV-Sportsmen Group

### **Others Present**

Jimmy Simmons, OHV Law Enforcement Program Manager, AGFD  
Jeff Gursh, AZ Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition  
Marge Dwyer, AZ OHV Ambassadors Program Manager  
Sully Sullivan, AZ OHV Ambassadors Program  
Jesse Davis, Livestock Grower  
Mark Weise, Development Branch Chief, AGFD  
Al Eiden, Landowner Relations Program Manager, AGFD  
Troy Christensen, Landowner Relations Program, AGFD

### **Meeting Notes**

The Landowner-Lessee/Sportsman Relations Committee (Committee) meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. An introduction of those present was initiated. Steve Carmickle praised the collaboration on this committee saying he has learned more with this group than he has while serving on other committees and doing projects on ranches.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Committee accepted the meeting minutes for July 17, 2012.

### **Nomination of New Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

Continuing with the rotation system for the chair and vice-chair positions which was adopted last year, Steve Carmickle moved into the chairman position for the next year. Joe King was chosen to serve as vice-chairman.

Troy Christensen informed the Committee of three individuals who have requested to be considered for appointment to the three vacant seats.

### **Commissioner's Comments**

Commissioner Norm Freeman's term on the Game and Fish Commission was coming to an end, so at yesterday's Commission meeting, Commissioner Kurt Davis was appointed as the new liaison to the Committee. Commissioner Davis informed the Committee of the Governor's appointment of Pat Madden, of Flagstaff, to the Game and Fish Commission. Referencing the discussion about landowner tags at the last meeting, which was held at the Arizona Cattle Growers Convention, Commissioner Davis told the group about an agenda item from yesterday's Commission meeting. It was the first read on a proposed 3-year pilot access project with the 750,000-acre Boquillas Ranch, which was threatening to lock up, effectively denying access to 68% of the huntable part of Game Management Unit 10. In exchange for equal, non-preferential access to the entire ranch, hunters will be required to follow a set of rules and pay a recreational impact fee which will go toward supporting infrastructure on the ranch. Commissioner Davis said he believed the resulting Landowner Compact would be good for addressing other ranches with access issues and maybe even lead to presently closed ranches being opened. Based on a program used in Wyoming, this project is designed to improve hunter ethics and increase the effectiveness of law enforcement. The arrangement is not considered perfect and all involved parties expect there will be some changes with each year's review of this pilot project. When other ranches eventually join into the Landowner Compact, the idea is that a violation on one ranch will result in loss of access privileges to all the ranches in the compact. It is hoped that this pilot will create a better working relationship with the Navajo Tribe and provide Game and Fish with an additional access strategy which is a better option than landowner tags. The concept was approved to move forward by the Commission and is now being reviewed by the Navajo Nation (owners of the Boquillas Ranch).

Commissioner Davis also briefed the Committee about another agenda item from yesterday's meeting. Due to various major concerns with the new Travel Management Plans (TMP) on two particular forests, the Commission gave direction to our officers on what we will and won't enforce. This strong stance will be taken until the parties come together for more collaborative discussions about the serious concerns regarding unmarked road management, confined camping, access, recreation, and enforcement. Other interested parties have also expressed these concerns with these two particular TMP's.

### **OHV Projects and Problems**

Jeff Gursh from the AZ Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition provided an update to the Committee on some of the issues discussed at previous meetings. He said there have been some major improvements to recreational management. When the coalition entered into a formal agreement with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) three years ago, it created a fundamental difference which gave the group more ability to partner and affect improvements than they previously had. This has resulted in improved enforcement in Table Mesa Recreation Area. Increasing the face to face interaction with the landowners to learn their specific needs regarding the recreation issues has led to improved results there, as well. Mr. Gursh said there have been things the coalition was able to do, which

the agencies could not, such as they have been a critical part of initiating cooperative agreements with various landowners who were reluctant to work with agencies. The coalition recently entered into an agreement with the Tonto National Forest hoping to be able to create the same successes there. Mr. Gursh hopes to also create more agreements in other areas. Steve Carmickle talked about some of Jeff Gursh's other successes in helping with various OHV issues and suggested that Mr. Gursh provide a presentation at the next meeting. Al Eiden added that Jeff had indeed proven to be a beneficial resource to the agencies.

Mr. Gursh informed the Committee of a new product called Agriplier, which he had great success with while working to address PM-10 dust issues; it is a crusting agent that promotes plant growth. Originally designed for use in Afghanistan, the product has been approved by both the Environmental Protection Agency and the State for mitigation of dust problems; it has applications that are beneficial to ranchers and farmers, as well. In cooperation with the AZ Cattle Growers Association, they are currently doing some experiments with the product in the Florence Junction area. Troy Christensen had heard about Agriplier when he attended the AZ Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, so he provided the company's contact information: Environmental Technology Solutions (ETS), [www.etspartners.com](http://www.etspartners.com) or [www.greenandgrow.com](http://www.greenandgrow.com), Scott Huish or Gary Nijak at 480-241-6421. Jeff Gursh offered to answer questions or provide a tour of treated areas; he can be reached at [gursh1spud@aol.com](mailto:gursh1spud@aol.com) or 602-788-9470.

Marge Dwyer told the Committee about the Arizona OHV Ambassadors (AOHVA). This program, run under the direction of AZ State Parks, trains and uses volunteer OHV users statewide to help with signing, trail maintenance, cattle guards, patrolling, education, grants, etc. AOHVA works in cooperation with the land management agencies and AGFD; they are also partnering with the OHV dealers to improve OHV user ethics and get additional fieldwork done. In response to some recent newspaper articles about OHV problems southeast of Phoenix, the AOHVA has met with the ranchers and is helping address the issues. AOHVA volunteers are working out there every week. Ms. Dwyer passed around a photo of a new sign which they offer to improve OHV user ethics in grazing areas. Although they currently have about 75 active volunteers, Ms. Dwyer asked for help getting more OHV users involved so they can keep expanding their efforts into more parts of the state. She can be contacted at [margedwyer@aol.com](mailto:margedwyer@aol.com) or 480-794-0316. Jeff Gursh added that AOHVA groups can also form partnerships with ranchers to help them with various chores, such as riding and repairing fence lines, etc.

### **Updates from Land Management Agencies**

Stephen Williams provided an update from the Arizona State Land Department (ASLD). He informed the Committee of several recent personnel changes including Maria Baier taking a position at the Sonoran Institute and Vanessa Hickman being promoted to be the new State Land Commissioner. Bill Webster retired, and the trespass investigator position was filled by Steve Rusiecki. Mr. Williams expressed his satisfaction in the qualifications and capabilities of all the promoted and new ASLD staff. He also updated the Committee on some issues which his department is dealing with. Commissioner Hickman has scheduled a meeting with AGFD Director Voyles regarding managing

OHV issues in the Desert Wells Multi-Use Area (DWMUA). Steve Carmickle added that the organized OHV community understands the seriousness of issues in the DWMUA and it will not insist on recreational OHV access to this area. There was additional discussion on some of the possible options for this area and the possible resulting effects. Stephen Williams told the Committee about a successful partnership which is underway with the Willow Springs Ranch and involved agencies to develop a road management plan on the ranch. Mr. Williams provided a follow-up regarding the issue rancher Francie Meyer brought up at the July meeting about an organized coyote hunt on the Haydon Combe Ranch. ASLD looked into this issue and determined that a Special Land Use Permit would be required for an organized event such as this; subsequent discussion with the event organizer resulted in him deciding not to hold the event. Troy Christensen added that AGFD is also helping the Meyer's with some other access issues.

Mark McEntarffer, from the Tonto National Forest (TNF), gave the Committee an update on various US Forest Service issues. He started with two updates provided by Tami Emmett on the Coronado National Forest: efforts are well underway to get legal access on Frye Mesa Road, and regarding Gardner Canyon Road, some issues have to be worked out before progress can continue on obtaining legal access. Mr. McEntarffer informed the Committee of several personnel changes at the TNF over the last couple years. Public meetings are underway on Sustainable Recreation; check the TNF website for details. He gave an update on the TNF Travel Management Plan; the comment period closes on March 4. Mr. McEntarffer suggested going to the website to stay posted on that process.

June Shoemaker from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) informed the Committee of several personnel changes at this agency, including Deb Rawhouser becoming the new Associate State Director. The District Manager on the Gila District, Tom Dabbs, has retired. The Gila District Office, which was in Sierra Vista, has been moved into the new Tucson Field Office building located in Tucson. Ms. Shoemaker informed the Committee of the progress on multiple Travel Management and Resource Management Plans. The RMP for the Sonoran Desert National Monument was finalized in September. The Ironwood National Monument RMP is almost ready to be sent to Washington DC for approval and should be approved by March. She added that, in response to recent issues, a multi-agency team is being organized to look at creating a pilot project for managing recreational shooting on the Sonoran Desert National Monument. Although many recreational shooters pursue their sport in a responsible manner, it is a challenge to reach out to the ones who are not ethical.

### **Landowner Relations Program Updates/Current Issues**

Al Eiden provided the Committee with an update from the Landowner Relations Program (LRP). He said the LRP Specialist in Region VI recently left, but the position would be refilled and changed slightly to also provide assistance in Region IV, which will make for representation around the entire state. LRP continues to look for new, additional strategies which can be incorporated along with our existing programs. Mr. Eiden said, over the last year, LRP has used the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program to put \$900,000 worth of projects on the ground on 28 different ranches resulting in access on 1.4 million acres of private land and nearly two million acres of

landlocked public land. He added that LRP's traditional programs are still working; for example, the Adopt-a-Ranch Program is going strong with 34 projects last year and nearly 1,000 volunteers. Part of our outreach efforts, LRP's interactive web-map has gone public and is getting about 200 hits a day; he asked the Committee to help spread the word about [azaccessmap.com](http://azaccessmap.com). The mapping tool is dynamic and suggestions to improve it are welcome. Mr. Eiden showed a map with ethics messages which the Babbitt Ranches asked LRP to create; the maps are handed out to people recreating on the ranch. He updated the Committee about the recent 9-month extension to the existing US Farm Bill; LRP will stay involved to try and make sure the next Farm Bill includes programs which will benefit Arizona. Larry Audsley asked for an update on the internal road inventory web-map introduced at last January's meeting. Mr. Eiden provided information about the progress already made and about how new modeling techniques are being incorporated which will make this a great tool for prioritizing our efforts.

### **Identification of Current Issues and Possible Solutions**

There was discussion about a wilderness area which a group is proposing for an area northwest of Phoenix. Commissioner Davis assured the Committee that the Commission is monitoring this issue and is aware of the negative effects it would have on the agencies, recreational users, and the ranching community.

Jimmy Simmons and Steve Carmickle told about some additional discussions which have taken place regarding the OHV issues facing the ephemeral ranching operations southeast of the Phoenix metropolitan area. Increased outreach, volunteer projects, and well-organized enforcement efforts are taking place in this area. However, the area's close proximity to Phoenix results in heavy use and the flat, open country makes it easy for unethical OHV users to travel cross-country, so solutions are difficult. Mr. Simmons gave the Committee statistics on the number of OHV citations which AGFD wrote and on the increase in OHV fatalities. He mentioned that new OHV brochures with expanded information on ethics were printed, but they need to be updated with recent changes that require helmets in side-by-sides. Mr. Carmickle and Marge Dwyer offered to get some of their members to help attach stickers to update the brochures and also to spread the word about the recent changes to helmet requirements. Mr. Simmons suggested that the OHV Bill of 2009 should be brought up to date with amendments to correct some issues.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held in conjunction with the Arizona Cattlemen's Association Convention, which will be held in Awatukee at the Wildhorse Pass Casino on July 25-27. Committee members will be informed of the date and time of the meeting once it has been determined.

### **Action Items:**

1. Meeting minutes distributed. (LRP staff)
2. Coordinate venue for next meeting and inform Committee. (LRP staff)